THE OBLIGATIONS MUSLIMS OWE TO THE QUR'AN

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SSQ

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Lahore - (Pakistan)

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FOREWORD

This article which appeared in Urdu under the title *"Musalman-o per Quran-i-Majid Ke Huquq"*is based on two addresses delivered by Dr. Israr Ahmad to the Congregations in Jamia Khazra, Samanabad, Lahore on two consecutive Fridays in January 1968 when the Muslims of Pakistan were celebrating the 1400th anniversary of the commencement of the Revelation of the Holy Quran to Prophet Muhammad (May peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). During the following month, speeches on similar topics were delivered by Doctor sahib at the Ajmal Bagh College, Sadiqabad, Ta'mir Millat High School, Sukkur, and Government College, Jhang. The text of these addresses and speeches was edited and published in the monthly 'Meesaq' in its May and June issues of the same year. In November 1969, it appeared in the form of a booklet under the title mentioned above, and in July 1972 its second edition of ten thousand copies was published by the Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Quran, Lahore.

'Musalman-o par Quran-i-Majid ke Huquq' is an impassioned call to the Muslims 'to return to the Quran,' to rededicate themselves to its study, and make it the sole guide for their lives. Considering the profound purpose behind the book, I felt that it should be rendered into English for the benefit of our English-reading public as well as for approaching the minds of the people abroad. Accordingly, I was thinking of seeking Doctor Shaib's permission for the translation of the book when, one day, to my delightful surprise he himself suggested that I should translate the *'Huquq'* — that being the brief and popular sobriquet of this book. Hence the translation now appears under the title: 'The Obligations Muslims Owe To The Quran.'

This translation has already been published in the form of an article by the All Pakistan Islamic Education Congress in a recent issue of their Journal "Islamic Education" under the title: What Does The Quran Demand From Its Followers?' and now, through their courtesty and cooperation, it is reappearing under a new 'title' in the form of a regular booklet. I pray that it may prove helpful in the fulfilment of the great purpose which the author of the original book, Dr. Israr Ahmad, has set before himself and which he is pursuing with a single-minded devotion, Amen.

MUHAMMAD IBRAHIM

THE OBLIGATIONS MUSLIMS OWE TO THE QURAN

During the last decade, international *Qirat* competitions have become a regular feature in the Muslim World. These competitions, in which well-known Qura from different countries have been participating to display their remarkable talents for the recitation of the Quran, have served a number of purposes. The large audiences who have been listening spell-bound to the recitations of the world-famous Qura have always been moved by the unique melody, eloquence and grandeur of the Quranic diction. This may have, for the time being, strengthened their belief in the Divine origin of the Quran. Morevoer, these competitions have popularised Tajwid (i.e. the art of reciting the Quran with correct pronunciation) in Malaysia, Indonesia and Pakistan. The Muslim children in these countries today can recite the Holy Book with much better accent and intonation than they could possibly do a few years ago.

Without intending to minimise the importance of reciting the Quran properly, one might ask the question: Have these competitions helped bridge the gulf that yawns between us and the Quran today? Or, have they established a real contact between us and the book of God? The answer to this question is 'No.'

Unfortunately, the great objective of establishing a real contact between us and the Quran has not been achieved even by the different religious seminars and symposia which have been held in our country and elsewhere during the recent years. The savants and scholars who participated in the discussions at these conferences and colloquia have generally dwelt at such topics as the greatness of the Quran,

its beauties and marvels etc., but no attempt has been made to consider the fundamental questions: What are our obligations towards the Quran? And how can we discharge these obligations? So far as the glory and greatness of the Quran is concerned, we believe it is indescribable and its adequate comprehension is beyond the reach of human mind. It is best known to the Lord of the heavens and the earth Whose word it is or to his blessed messenger to whom it was revealed.

Therefore, instead of making a presumptuous attempt at describing its unique merits, the most pertinent thing for us to do is that we should clearly understand our duties and responsibilities towards the Quran and then see whether or not we are conscientiously fulfilling these duties and responsibilities. If we find that we are not doing so, we should seriously think obout the line of action we should adopt for their fulfilment; and then adopt the line without any further delay because our very salvation depends on our efforts in this direction. Paying pompous compliments to the Quran will not be enough and it cannot be a substitute for actually discharging our obligations towards the Holy Book.

Now what are these obligations? Or, in other words, what does the Quran demand from us?

The Quran makes five Demands from every Muslim. Put in a simple Language, these demands are as follows :

1. A Muslim is required to believe in the Quran.
2. He is required to read it.
3. He is required to understand it.
4. He is required to act upon its teachings.
5. He is required to convey its teachings to others.

We will now ponder over these demands or obligations in some depth along with a brief explanation of the terms in which they have been expressed in the Quran itself so that besides getting a clear idea of his duties towards the Quran, the reader may also become familiar with basic

Quranic terminology.

1
IMAN WA TA'ZIM

(Belief in the Divine origin of the Quran and an attitude of reverence towards it.)

The Quranic term for belief in a spiritual reality is *Iman* (faith) which has two phases : *Iqrar-um-Billisan* (verbal profession) and *Tasdiqum-Bilqalb* (heart-felt conviction). A verbal profession of a belief in the spiritual realities upheld by Islam is the condition of a man's admittance into the fold of this religion, but true faith will emerge only when that belief deepens into a strong inward conviction.

Now what is meant by having a faith in the Quran ? It means that one should, in the first instance, verbally profess that the Quran is the Word of God that was revealed by Him through His chosen angel Gabriel, to the last of His messengers, Prophet Muhammad (may God shower His blessings on him). Having made this profession, a person will be accepted as a member of the Muslim community but he may not have yet attained true faith. It is only when he comes to cherish this belief with a deep, inward conviction that the light of true faith will illumine his heart. Then he will find his heart to be full of reverence for the holy book. As his faith becomes stronger and stronger, his mind will come more and more under the spell of the Quran and his feeling of reverence for it will become deeper and deeper. Thus faith and reverence go together. We learn from the study of the Quran that the first man to believe in this revealed book was none other than the Prophet himself who was followed by his companions.

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَآ أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَّبِّهٖ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ط (البقرة)

"The messenger believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, as well as the believers." (II :285).

Their belief was a deep inward conviction that the Quran was *Kalam Ullah* (the *Word of God)*. This conviction developed in them a reverential attitude towards the Quran and created in their hearts an unbounded love and devotion for it. Was it not for this reason that the Holy Prophet waited anxiously for the Revelation to come got impatient if it was temporarily suspended, and when it was resumed, he tried to memorise it with utmost avidity and eagerness so much so that Allah, out of love and affection for his messenger, forbade him to be impatient in this regard with the following instructions :

وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْاٰنِ (طٰـهٰ: ١١٤)

لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهٖ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهٖ ○ (القيٰمة: ١٦)

Do not be in haste for the Quran. (XX:114).
And do not move your tongue quickly, (trying) to memorise the revelation hurriedly. (LXXV: 16)

Once at an early stage in the process of Quranic revelation its continuity was interrupted for an unusually longer period. It is reported that this interruption caused the Holy Prophet so much anguish and distress that he would often think of throwing himself down from a mountain. So deep was his devotion for the Quran that he would spend the greater part of the night in prayer and recitation. He would stand reciting the Quran for long hours until his feet would get swollen. His companions were also equally enamoured by the Holy Book and would recite it for long hours at night. Many of them had made it a point to go through the whole Quran once in a week. The Holy Prophet, though himself the recipient of the Quranic revelation, often asked his companions to recite the Quran to him and would be moved to tears by the intensity of feelings roused in his heart.

Obviously, the reason why the companions of the Holy Prophet came to entertain such a deep love and reverence for the Quran, in their hearts and regarded it with so much

reverence was that their belief in the Quran being a revelation from the Almighty had reached the highest stage of conviction – a stage at which a reality is accepted as an Absolute Truth. Now let us examine the condition of our faith in the Quran. We do profess that the Quran is a Divine revelation and, indeed, we should be thankful to the Almighty that he has included us among those who hold this belief about His book, but most of us are not inwardly convinced of its being the Word of God, a revelation from the Creator of the heavens and the earth. This is the real cause of our estrangement from, and indifference to the Quran. Even a casual introspection and self-examination will prove that our hearts are devoid of the true belief in the Quran and, instead of harbouring true faith, they have become the dwellings of doubts and misgivings. My fellow Muslims might resent this plain speaking on my part; nevertheless, it is a fact that we, Muslims, woefully lack a staunch faith in the Divine origin of the Quran. The state of doubt and uncertainty in which we find ourselves today has been described in the Quran in the following words :

وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُورِثُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيبٍ
(الشورىٰ: ١٤)

Truly, those who have inherited, the book after them are in suspicious (disquieting) doubt concerning it (XLII : 14)

This lack of faith is the reason why we neither find any reverence for the Quran in our hearts, nor feel inclined to study it, nor evince any interest in pondering over its meaning not ever think of seeking its guidance in conducting our lives. As long as we do not make up this dreadful deficiency, no useful purpose will be served by any amount of religious instruction.

The first and foremost duty of every Muslim, therefore, is to check his belief in the Quran to see whether his belief in the Quran's being a sacred *heavenly* book is a mere dogma which has nothing to do with his practical life, or whether he

is convinced of its being a Word of God which has been vouchsafed to mankind to seek guidance from it and make it a practical code of life. If we hold this conviction , we may have reason to be satisfied and be thankful to *Allah*, but if not – which unfortunately is the case with a vast majority – we should first of all make up this deficiency in our faith, because the fulfilment of our other obligations to the Quran is dependent upon it.

It may be asked how can this deficiency be made up? Obviously, the easiest and the most effective way to acquire and augment faith is to move in the socieity of godly persons whose hearts are illumined by the light of true faith. The Sahaba (companions of the Holy Prophet) owed their unique faith to the inspiring influence of their Master, who himself was an embodiment of faith and certitude. After the death of the Holy Prophet, (P.B.U.H), one can never dream of attaining the same degree of faith as the *Sahaba* had attained on account of his physical presence among them, still the method of improving and perfecting fiath in the company of the pious will be followed with immense advantage even today ; so, we need to turn to the pious among us for continually refreshing our faith.. So far as the pious are concerned, they, in their turn will find the greatest source of the light of faith in the Holy Quran. They will also make a careful study of the biographies of the Holy Prophet and his companions so that they may be able to enjoy an intellectual and spiritual companionship of the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) and his Sahaba (may God be pleased with them all). As regards the faith in the Quran and its growth, we have to depend upon one source only, and that is the Holy Quran itself.

As we shall later on discuss this point in some detail, *Iman* (faith), in reality, is not something that can be planted in us from outside. It is an embodiment of fundamental truths that continually flash through our innner being and are caught and reflected by our heart. We can say that the human heart is a wondeful mirror that automatically catches and reflects

the light of those universal truths that constitute *Iman*. What happens is that sometimes the surface of this mirror gets blurred under the effect of wrong environment and education and fails to catch and reflect the inner light of *Iman*. To polish this mirror so that it may clearly reflect man's inner light, God, out of His benevolence to mankind, has revealed His Word, urging us to discern the light inside ourselves and reminding us of the truths which are the intuitive apprehensions of our unsophisticated mind.

تَبْصِرَةً وَّذِكْرٰى لِكُلِّ عَبْدٍ مُّنِيْبٍ ۝ (قٓ : ٨)

(Urging) observation and reminding every devotee to God (of the truths engrained in human nature). (L: 8)

If the Holy Book is studied and its meanings are pondered over in a genuine quest for truth, all the veils of darkness are lifted one after the other and our inner self is illumined by the light of faith. After the heart's mirror has once been rendered capable of clearly reflecting the light of faith, we shall still have to revert to the Quran whenever we find that its shining surface is becoming dull and obscure under the effect of wordly temptations. The following tradition, narrated on the authority of Hadrat Ibn Umar refers to the polishing effect of the Quran on the mirror of the heart:

> The Holy Prophet (once) remarked "Surely, these hearts get rusted as iron gets rusted in water." He was asked how the heart's rust could be rubbed off. He replied. "By frequent remembrance of death and the recitation of the Quran."

The crux of the matter is that to believe the Quran to be a sacred heavenly book a mere dogma, cannot bring about any change in our present conditions and in our attitude of cold indifference towards the Quran. If we wish to do justice to the Quran and fulfil the demands it makes from us, we should first of all have the deep conviction that the Quran is the last and final message of God delivered to the last of His messengers for the guidance of mankind. As soon as we come

to have this belief, our attitude towards the Quran will undergo a radical change. As soon as we realize that it is a revelation from our Lord, our Creator, that Most Exalted Being Whose slightest apprehension transcends the bounds of our imagination[1], our thinking will be completely revolutionised. We shall then feel that the Quran is the greatest blessing for us under the sun. Its recitation will sustain our souls, and contemplation over its meanings will chasten our hearts and enlighten our minds.

We shall never feel satiated with its study ; and even after dedicating the best powers of our mind and intellect to its service, and having devoted our whole life to meditation over its meanings, we shall feel that we have not been able to do justice to the Glorious Quran, the greatest of the heavenly books.

II

TILAWAT WA TARTIL[2]

(Slow, thoughtful reading of the Quran with proper pronunciation)

The Arabic equivalents for 'Reading' are 'Qirat' and 'Tilawat' Both these terms have been employed by the Quran in connection with the reading of the Quran. Tilawat is used for reading it with all the reverence due to it as a sacred scripture, with an open mind fully disposed to imbibing its influence, and with a keen desire to model our lives upon its teaching. It is a term specifically used for the reading of heavenly books. *Qirat,* however, is a general term used for

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1. According to the best of men after the prophets i.e., Hadrat Abu Bakr "the clearest apprehension of God possible to man lies in admitting his total inability to apprehend Him." Hadrat Ali is said to have made the following addition to these words as if to complete the couplet: 'And to make a quisitive probe into His being tentamounts to polytheism.

2. The words are used as Quranic terms with special meanings that have been explained in the following discussion.

reading any kind of book. This difference in the connotation of these words as equivalents of 'reading' is borne out by their literal meanings; for Tilawat means 'to follow or walk behind any one', while Qirat means just 'to draw or combine things together'.

In the beginning, *Qirat* was used for learning the Quran and acquiring its knowledge, and a *'Qari* was originally a scholar of the Quran. As time passed, the term was gradually torn from its original meaning and came to be used for reading the Quran with correct pronunciation and modulation according to the rules of *Tajwid*, and *Tilawat* came to be used as a general term for reading the sacred book with fervour and devotion for the purpose of seeking guidance and blessings.

Tilawat of the Holy Quran is not only an important form of worship but also an effective method of continually re-freshing our *Iman* (faith). The Quran is not a book to be understood once and for all. It is a book to be read again and again and to be studied for ever because it provides sus-tenance to the human soul. As our earthly body is in constant need of food which is obtained from the earth; similarly, our soul which is of heavenly origin constantly needs the help of Divine Revelation for fostering and strengthening itself. If the Quran were to be understood once and for all, there would be no need for the Holy Prophet at least to read it again and again. On the contrary, we find from the study of the Quran itself that he was advised to do so. In the earliest days of his prophethood he was especially instructed to stand for the greater part of the night in prayer before his Lord reciting the Quran in slow, rhythmic tones. In the later stages of his prophetic career particularly when he was faced with the heavy odds and was required to muster up special courage and fortitude to sustain himself, the special instruction he received from his Lord was to recite the Quran. In the chapter, entitled *'Kahf'* he was given the following instructions :

وَاتْلُ مَآ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّكَ ۚ

لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِهٖ قف وَلَنْ تَجِدَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مُلْتَحَدًا ○
(الكهف: ٢٧)

And recite what has been revealed to thee of the book of thy Lord: None can change His words, and none will thou find as a refuge other than Him (XVIII:27)

and again, in the chapter entitled *'Ankabut'* a similar instruction was repeated.

اُتْلُ مَآ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَاَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ ط (العنكبوت: ٤٥)

Recite what is sent of the Book by inspiration to thee and establish regular prayer (XXIX:45).

It follows from the facts stated above that constant and regular study of the Holy Quran is essential becuase it provides food for the soul, because it is a mean of refreshing and reviving faith, and a reliable weapon for surmounting difficulties and obstacles. The following ayah (verse) from the chapter entitled *'al-Baqara'* describes how the lovers of the Quran manifested their great regards for this book :

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَتْلُوْنَهٗ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهٖ ط (البقرة: ١٢١)

Those, whom we have delivered the Book recited it as it ought to be recited. (II:121)

May God give us strength that we may be able to study the Quran as it should be studied, we have, first of all, to understand how the Quran ought to be recited and what steps should be taken if the required standard of recitation is to be attained.

1. Tajwid :

In this connection, the first step we are required to take is to acquire a thorough knowledge of the Arabic Alphabet, their phonetic sounds, and the significance of the different kinds of pauses used in the Quran. The technical term used for this knowledge is *Tajwid,* which is a must for a good fluent

recitation. In the thirties and forties, almost every Muslim child in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent started his education with *Tajwid*. At the very outset he was given a clear idea of the letters of the Quran and their correct phonetic sounds. Although as already stated in the beginning of this booklet some efforts have been made in Pakistan and other Muslim countires to popularise *Tajwid* still the fact remains that a vast majority of the Muslim youth, even a large number of adults and old people among us cannot just read the Quran. This lack of ability to read even the bare text of the Quran is due, on the one hand to the decline of the classical system of education that was imparted in the mosques and maktabs to all the children of the community, rich and poor, and, on the other hand, to the popularity of the kindergarten and other types of modern primary schools which do not include the recitation of the Quran in their curriculum. Here I will suggest that all such persons to whichever age group they may belong as do not possess the ability to read the Quran properly should realize their deficiency and take necessary steps to remove it. We should also adopt it as a decided policy that the education of our children will start with *Tajwid* and the first thing they will learn will be how to read the Quran correctly. Over-emphasis on this point may not be very desirable, nevertheless it is incumbent upon every educated person to acquire the ability of reading the Quran with a correct accent and pronunciation, carefully observing the pauses used in it. Hence without acquiring this ability our obligation of reciting the Quran cannot be fulfilled.

2. Daily Recitation :

If we wish to fulfil our obligation of reciting the Quran, the second thing we are required to do is to include the recitation of the Quran in the daily routine of our life, and each one of us should recite a certain portion of the Holy Book regularly every day without fail. The portion fixed for daily recitation can be different for different people. The maximum portion which has the support of the Holy Prophet

is one-third of the Quran. It means that ten *paras* (parts) should be recited each day so that the recitation of the whole Quran may be completed in three days. A minimum portion—and mind you, any thing less than this bare minimum could not be even imagined till the recent years--could be one *para* daily so that the whole Quran could be read in a month. In fact, this is the least amount of recitation which should be done every day and an amount less than this would not be worth the name. The middle position between the maximum and minimum is that one should read the whole Quran in a week. This, indeed, was the practice followed by the majority of the sahaba and the same according to a tradition, was suggested to Hadrat Abdullah Bin Umar by the Holy Prophet. It is for this reason that the Quran was divided into seven *Ahzab* (section) in the time of the Sahaba.[1] The first six of the *Ahzab* consist of three, five, seven, nine, eleven and thirteen *suras* (chapters) respectively and the seventh called *Hizb-ul-mufassal* (Miscellaneous Section) consists of the rest of the Book. Approximately every *Hizb* (section) comprizes four *paras* (parts), which can be recited quite satisfactorily in two hours.

Persons of a devout nature and staunch faith should do this amount of recitation daily. They may be mediocrities or intellectuals, for the nourishment of their soul, all have to depend upon the regular recitation of the Holy Book. To the average kind of men it will serve as an admonition or remembrance of God, and to the men of learning and intelligence, as a source of konwledge and food for thought. Even those who ponder over the meaning of the Quran day and night, who think deeply over its individual *suras* for years on end and who pause for long over the subtle points in its text, cannot do without this regular recitation. Indeed, they require its aid all the more in the noble task they have set before themselves. Actually, constant recitation

1. It may be noted that the present mechanical division of the whole text into thirty parts and of each part into smaller sub-parts called Ruku's was made much later.

of the Holy Book will help solve many of their problems and will continuously open up new vistas of thought before their minds.[1]

3. Melodious voice:

It is also required for the proper recitation of the Quran that a person should read it in the best manner and in the most melodious voice he can. It should be necessary because every human being is gifted with a love for music and has a natural fondness for sweet and melodious sounds. Islam is a natural relgion. It does not curb any of our inherent tendencies but diverts them into healthy channels. As we have an instinctive love for the beauty of sight and the beauty of sound, we insist upon a fascinating printing of the Holy Quran and its recitation in a soft melodious voice. The Prophet has urged us to:

زَيِّنُوا الْقُرْآنَ بِأَصْوَاتِكُمْ

"Adorn the Quran with your voices."

He has also warned us against our negligence in this matter in the words:

مَنْ لَّمْ يَتَغَنَّ بِالْقُرْآنِ فَلَيْسَ مِنَّا (ابوداؤد)

"One who does not recite the Quran in a melodious voice is not from us." (Abu Daud)

And has given us the following tidings as a further inducement for melodious recitation:

مَا أَذِنَ اللّٰهُ لِشَيْءٍ أَذِنَهُ لِحُسْنِ الصَّوْتِ بِالْقُرْآنِ۔

"Allah does not listen to anything so attentively as He listens to the Quran being recited in a sweet voice."

It is a common experience of the devoted scholars of the Quran that when they were perplexed by an intellectual problem weighing upon their minds, they found that, during course of their recitation of the Quran, a clue to the solution of the problem suddenly struck their minds. They got the enlightenment from a passage of the Quran which they had read hundred times before, but as their mind was not preoccupied by the problem, the passage did not yield the interpretation relevant to its solution.

It often happened that, while going along his way, the Holy Prophet heard a companion recite the Quran in a sweet-sounding voice. He would stop and stand for a long time listening to the Quran being recited and would appreciate it later on. Sometimes, he would ask a companion to recite the Quran to him. It is stated in the books of traditions that once he asked Abdullah bin Mas'ud to recite the Quran to him. The latter (much astonished at the request) said: "Messenger of Allah, how can I recite the Quran to you, while you are the person to whom it was revealed?" He replied "I like to hear it being recited by others." Accordingly, Hadrat Ibn-e Masud began to recite, and, as the Holy Prophet sat listening, his eyes welled up with tears which could be seen trickling down his cheeks. On another occassion, he heard a companion recite the Quran in a melodious voice which he praised in the words:

> "You have been granted a share from the musical talent of the sons of David."

Although a person should recite the Quran in the most melodious voice he can produce because otherwise the recitation will be far from satisfactory, yet to over-emphasize this aspect of recitation is not without danger. When a melodious recitation is the outcome of mere show or affectation or when one takes to it as a profession, it becomes a serious perversion and a reprehensible practice. We should therefore carefully guard against this danger, still we may seek the satisfaction of our love for the beauty of sound in reciting the Quran or in hearing it being recited in a melodious voice. Hence everyone of us should read the Book of God in as nice a manner and as sweet a voice as it may be possible for him to do.

4. Objective and subjective conditions:

Reciting the Quran as it ought to be recited depends upon the fulfilment of a number of objective and subjective

conditions. The objective conditions to be fulfilled are that one should perform ablution before starting the recitation, that he should sit facing the *Qibla* and that he should start the recitation with *taawwuz* (seeking God's protection against the *Satan*). Subjectively he should contemplate the greatness of the book and the greatness of the Being who has revealed it and should recite it with a complete concentration and absorption, a deep feeling of submissiveness and humility, and utmost fervour and devotion. He should read the Book of Allah with a sincere and earnest desire to get at the truth and with a firm resolve to transform himself according to its teachings. He should constantly ponder and deliberate over its meanings not with a view to finding from it a confirmation of his own thoughts and theories but genuinely seeking from it the guidance it can offer. As it has been explained above, the literal meaning of *Tilawat* is 'to follow or walk closely behind any one.' Therefore, in the real sense of the term, it demands an attitude of *self-abandonment* and *receptivity.* Such an attitude is, indeed, the essence of *Tilawat*.

5. Tartil (Reading in slow, measured rhythmic tones):

The ideal way in which the Holy Book should be recited is that one should stand in post-midight prayer before his Lord with folded hands in all humility, and recite it, in a receptive state of mind, slowly and patiently, pausing at proper places so as to enable one's heart to imbibe its influence. This kind of recitation is *Tartil* and perhaps the most important instruction that was given to the Holy Prophet in the earliest stage of his prophetic mission was to recite the Quran in this manner:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمُزَّمِّلُ ۝ قُمِ الَّيْلَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ۝ نِّصْفَهٗٓ اَوِ انْقُصْ مِنْهُ
قَلِيْلًا ۝ اَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْاٰنَ تَرْتِيْلًا ۝ (المزمل: ١-٤)

O! thou folded in garment! stand (in prayer) by-night. But not

all night, Half of it, Or a little less, Or a little more; And recite the Quran in slow, measured rhythmic tones. (LXXIII: 1-4)

Reading the Quran slowly and thoughtfully making pauses at proper points in its text has a resemblance with the mode of its revelation. As we all know the whole Quran was not revealed once but it has descended piecemeal at intervals. In the chapter entitled *'furqan'* by way of answering those who objected as to why the Quran was not revealed all at once, Allah says addressing His Apostle:

كَذٰلِكَ ج لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهٖ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنٰهُ تَرْتِيْلًا ۝ (الفرقان:٣٢)

Thus (is it revealed) that we May strengthen thy heart thereby, and we have rehearsed it to thee, in slow well-arranged stages, gradually. (XXV:32).

This signifies that *Tartil* is an effective means of strengthening the heart's convictions. Undoubtedly, reading the Quran on this pattern does the greatest good to the human heart. It often moves one to tears with intensity of feeling. While explaining *Tartil*, Allama Ibn-e-Arabi, the author of *'Ahkam-ul-Quran'* has quoted the following tradition narrated on the authority of Hadrat Hasan:

Once the Holy Prophet happened to pass by a person who was reading the Quran. He was reading Ayah by Ayah, and the end of each he paused and wept. The messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said to his companions 'Have you heard God's command: Read the Quran in slow, measured tones. Look ; here you have its domonstration.'

The following words of the Holy Prophet contain a similar instruction for *Tartil-ul-Quran* i.e. (reading it in slow rhythmic tones).

اُتْلُوا الْقُرْاٰنَ وَابْكُوْا (ابن ماجه)

"Recite the Quran and weep."

The Holy Prophet's own condition during the night prayer, which has been described in books of tradition is a case in point. When he stood in his night prayer reciting the Quran slowly, thoughtfully making short pauses in the recitation, holding a communion with his Lord, he would weep with such intensity of feeling that his breast would produce a sizzling sound as if it were a kettle on fire in which something was being cooked.

6. Committing to memory:

If the Quran is to be recited as it was recited by the Holy Prophet, we have to learn by heart as much of the holy book as possible. Unfortunately, the practice of memorising portions of the Quran for long recitations in the night prayer has almost died out. However, the custom of memorising the whole Quran still exists. Naturally, for this a start has to be made in childhood when the question of understanding the Quran does not arise, but even this custom is losing ground. Memorising the whole Quran has unluckily been left to a class of poor down-trodden people in our society who adopt it as a profession. This was not the case till recent years. In the pre-partition days, custom was quite common even among respectable, well-to-do families, and in some cities in undivided India almost every Muslim family had at least one *Hafiz*[1] Then it was considered to be discreditable on the part of a family not to have a *Hafiz* among its members. No doubt, memorising the Quran is a noble tradition. It is a part of the divine dispensation for the preservation of the Quran and should be maintained with renewed vigour and enthusiasm. However committing the whole Quran to memory is not within the reach of every person. What I wish to stress here is that every one of us should try his utmost to learn maximum portion of the Quran by heart so that he may be able to recite it to his Lord, standing before Him in prayer. This is the essential

1. One who has learned the whole Quran by heart.

pre-requisite for reciting the Book of God as it ought to be recited and as it was recited by the Holy Prophet himself, but it is a pity that we have lost eagerness and fervour for the memorization of the Quran. Even men of religious learning among us have grown quite negligent in this matter. The condition of even those who lead the congregational prayers in the mosques is, no better. Most of them seem to have become contented with a few short *suras* they have once committed to memory and go on repeating them in prayers. Surely, it is a sad state of affairs which must be corrceted . All of us must develop in our hearts a deep love for the Quran, look upon the part of the holy book we have memorised as our real and most valuable asset in life and make a continuous effort at increasing and enhancing it. Thus shall we be able to experience the blissful joy of *Tartil* and provide for our souls greater and greater amount of sustenance in the best possible form.

III

TAZAKKUR WA TADABBUR[1]

(Recalling through the Quran the Fundamental Truths intuitively Recognised by Human Nature and Reflecting over its meaning)

We have discussed two of the claims that the Quran has upon us: (i) That we should believe in it and (ii) that we should recite it. Now we proceed to explain the third claim it has upon us. It is that we should understand it. Obviously, the Quran has been revealed that it may be understood. There would be no sense in believing in it if we do not follow its meanings. Also how can it serve as a source of guidance for us if we fail to comprehend its message. Mere recitation (recitation without understanding the meaning

1. Usually translated as 'Admonition and Reflection' the words are really very significant Quranic terms. Hence the need to indicate their meaning in the long alternate title in the brackets.

of the text) may be excusable in the case of persons who have not been fortunate enough to receive any education and are now post that age at which one can do so. Even a clumsy recitation on their part may be acceptable and may win them a reward from God. Similarly a person who cannot read the Quran at all, nor can learn how to do so, may get a reward and blessings from God if he just moves his fingers affectionately and reverently along the lines of the holy book believing it to be *Kalamullah* (the Word of God). But if those persons who may have devoted a considerable part of their life to their own education, may have acquired a knowledge of different arts and sciences and may have learnt foreign languages besides their own- read the Quran thoughtlessly without understanding its meaning, their recitation will be altogether futile and fruitless.

Over and above this, it is quite probable that with their poor thoughtless reading these indifferent persons may be considered to be guilty of making a parody of recitation or holding the Quran up to ridicule. However,if they make a firm resolve to acquire a knowledge of the Quran and start earnest efforts in this direction, they may in the meantime continue to read the Quran in the way they can. Perhaps, under the circumstances, recitation, mere and simple, may be acceptable from them and may even bring them a reward from God.

As for the comprehension of the Quran, it is not a simple affair. It has numerous stages and grades accessible to different persons according to the plane of their thinking. The Holy Quran is like an unbounded sea from which a scholar can bring out pearls of knowledge and wisdom according to his natural ability, intellectual equipment and mental make-up. His efforts to comprehend the Quran will be rewarded in proportion to the enthusiasm, time and labour that he puts into its study and research. It will be found, at the same time, that, so far as its comprehen-

sion is concerned, no person, however intelligent and learned, shall ever feel that he has done justice to the Quran even though he may have spent his whole life pouring over its its pages and meditating over its meanings. The Holy Prophet himself has characterised the Quran as a treasure (of knowledge and wisdom) which shall never be exhausted[1]. It is such a source of guidance that man shall ever continue to feel the need of reverting to it and reflecting upon it.

وَفِي ذَٰلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ (المطففين: ٢٦)

For this let those aspire who have aspiration. (LXXXIII: 26)

Therefore, let men of courage and determination come forward to undertake the stupendous task of Quranic research, fired with the noble ambition of surpassing others in this filed.

The Holy Quran urges us again and again to study it intelligently, bringing our thought to bear upon it, and exercising our reasoning faculty in following its arguments and comprehending its meanings. For this purpose, it uses such words as *'Fahm,' 'Aql', 'Fiqha', 'Fikr'*[2] ; but another important term, more widely used in the Quran in this contact is *'Tazakkur'*. For understanding the significance of this term we have to note that the Quran frequently calls itself *'Zikr', 'Zikra' and 'Tazkira'.*[3] In reality, *Tazakkur* pertains to the first stage in the comprehension of the Quran and indicates the real purpose which it should serve. It also alludes to the fact that the Quranic teachings are not

1. In a long tradition narrated on the authority of Hadrat Ali, we have the following remark of the Holy Prophet about the Quran: The learned scholars shall never be satisfied with the study of the Quran, nor will its interest ever diminish on account of repeated readings, nor will its marvels be ever exhausted. (i.e. Its study will ever continue to yield fresh fruits fo knowledge and wisdom).

2. The first three words are approximate synonyms meaning 'understading' and the last one means 'reflection'.

3. Words from the same root with slighly different meanings: Their English equivalents are 'rembembrance,' 'warning' and 'admonition.'

extraneous to the human nature. It actually reflects the experiences of man's innerself and is meant to awaken reminiscences of something already apprehended rather than to import anything altogether new. The Holy Quran appeals to all thoughtful person whom it addresses as *'Ulul albab' (men of understanding)* and *'Qaum-un-yaqilun'* (people who understand) to think and ponder over the outer universe of the matter as well as the inner universe of the spirit, as both are replete with the unmistakable signs of the Almighty Creator. Simultaneously, it invites them to deliberate over its own signs,[1] i.e., its divinely inspired verses. In the chapter entitled *'Younus'* it says:

كَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ○ (يونس: ٢٤)

Thus do we explain the signs in detail for those who reflect. (X:24)

and in the chapter entitled *'Nahl'*:

وَاَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ
اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ○ (النحل: ٤٤)

And we have sent down unto thee the message that thou mayst explain clearly to men that is sent for them, and that they may give thought. (XVI:44).

Again, in the same vein, we have in the second chapter, *'al-Baqara'*:

كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ○ (البقرة: ٢٤٢)

Thus doth God make clear His signs to you, in order that ye may understand. (II:242).

and similarly in the beginning of the chapter entitled *'Yusuf'* we have the following verse :

اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ○ (يوسف: ٢)

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1. The Quran calls its verses 'ayat' ie. signs (of God). These verses are considered as signs of God—as important as any other of His signs in the universe or in the heart of man. It is because the Quranic verses are parts of Kalam ullah (God's speech) and also because. like cother signs of God, they too, turn man's mind to the Almighty.

We have sent it down as an Arabic Quran in order that ye may learn wisdom. (XII:2)

Pondering over the three categories of signs (i.e., the Quranic signs, the signs in the physical universe and the signs in the spiritual world of the human heart) a man will be able to perceive a perfect concord between them; and, with the realisation of this concord, he will grasp certain fundamental truths which are borne out by the internal testimony of his own nature. So to say, the truths cherished by his innerself will emerge from its depths and shine with all their brilliance on the screen of his consciousness. In other words, full and intense awareness of the Absolute Reality, which is the core of *Iman,* will then spring up to his conscious mind like the memory of a forgotten thing shooting up from the dark depths of the mind to its surface with the aid of a pertinent suggestion. For this very phenomenon, the Quran uses the term *'Tazakkur'*[1] Every person whether mediocre or an intellectual is in constant need of *Tazakkur* which is necessary for recalling to the mind the truths that have been forgotten or for keeping in mind the truths that are likely to be forgotten. It is for this reason that God has made the Quran so easy for the purposes of *Tazakkur*—a fact which has been stated four times in the same *sura*[2] :

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ ۝

(القمر: ١٧، ٢٢، ٣٢، ٤٠)

We have made the Quran easy as a means of reminding (men of the truths forgotten by them.) Is there any who will benefit from this reminding? (LIV : 17, 22, 32, 40)

The Quran has thus declared in unequivocal terms that every man can get the benefit of *Tazakkur* from it. It does not matter if a person's intelligence is limited, and his knowledge of logic and philosophy is poor; and if he has no fine sense of language and literature. In spite of these drawbacks, he

1. Literally the word means: "To remember; to recall". In the Quranic sense of the term it means, 'to recall forgotten Realities".

2. Sura LIV.

can have *Tazakkur.* from the Quran if he has a noble heart, a sound mind, and an untainted nature not perverted by any kind of crookedness. He should read the Quran and should go on understanding its simple meanings. This will be enough for the purposes of *Tazakkur.*

The Quran has been rendered easy in different ways for those who try to understand it and derive *Tazakkur* from it. In the first place, its central theme and basic subjects are nothing new or unfamiliar to the human nature. While reading the Quran a man often feels as if he were listening to the echoes of his inner self. Secondly, the mode of inference adopted is simple and natural, and difficult and abstruse subjects have been brought home to the reader by easy and simple parables. Thirdly, although the Quran is a masterpiece of literature and a paragon of eloquence, yet its language is generally simple and a man with a smattering of Arabic can easily understand the text except a few difficult portions. In spite of all this, for the attainment of *Tazakkur* from the Quran, a basic knowledge of Arabic is a must. Looking into a trnaslation simultaneously along with reading the text will not be sufficient for this purpose. I most honestly feel that it is imperative on every Muslim to acquire as much knowledge of the Arabic language as may enable him to understand the simple meaning of the Quranic text as he reads it along without having to raise his eyes again and again for consulting a translation.

I fail to understand what excuse will be put forward in the court of the Almighty in their defence by those Muslims who are not only educated but have obtained graduate and post-graduate degrees and have mastered such difficult arts and sciences like Medicine and Engineering, for not learning so much Arabic that they could follow His holy book. Out of a sincere regard and genuine concern for these Muslims, let me assert that their negligence in the matter of learning Arabic is tantamount to not only ridiculing the book of God but also treating it with contempt.

They should realize that by their irresponsible behaviour in this regard they are rendering themselves liable to an awful chastisement and a dreadful penalty.

In my humble opinion, to learn so much Arabic as may enable a person to follow the meaning of the Quran easily is a duty that every educated Muslim owes to the Holy Book and not to fulfil this duty is like being cruel to the Quran and to ourselves.

The second stage in the comprehension of the Quran is *"Tadabbur-fil-Quran"* i.e., thinking over it deeply, making it a subject of intense study and diving into the depths of its knowledge and wisdom. The Quran requires such a deep study because it is *'Hudal Linnas'* i.e., guidance for people. Not only does it guide the common people by presenting them correct view of God and the universe as well as sound moral principles, but it also contains perfect guidance for men of learning and understanding and has always served them as a beacon of light in every intellectual or spiritual crisis in their life.

That the Quran is something to be reflected and pondered over is a point which has been emphasized by the Quran itself :

كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ اِلَيْكَ مُبٰرَكٌ لِّيَدَّبَّرُوْٓا اٰيٰتِهٖ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ
اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ ۝ (صٓ : ٢٩)

Here is a book which we have sent down unto thee, full of blessings, that they may meditate on its signs, and that men of understanding may receive admonition. (XXXVIII:29)

By way of stressing this point further, it says, in a mildly admonishing vein :

اَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُوْنَ الْقُرْاٰنَ ؕ (النساء : ٨٢)

So, do not they reflect on the Quran? (VI:82)

اَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُوْنَ الْقُرْاٰنَ اَمْ عَلٰى قُلُوْبٍ اَقْفَالُهَا (محمّد: ۲۴)

Do they not then deeply think over the Quran, or are their hearts locked by them? (XLVII:24).

The Quran is quite easy for *'Tazakkur'* but is, in the same degree difficult for *'Tadabbur'*.[1] Those who dive into this boundless ocean know that it is not possible to fathom its depth. We learn from authentic traditions that the companions of the Holy Prophet used to ponder over the different *suras* of the Quran for years on end. It is reported about Hadrat Abdullah Bin Umar that he spent eight years contemplating over *al-Baqara.*[2] Let it be noted that this was the case with the people who spoke the same language in which the Quran was revealed and who, being the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet, had seen it being revealed before their own eyes. There was no necessity for them to learn the Arabic language and its grammar or to undertake research for ascertaining the historical background of different *Ayahs* or *suras* and the occasions on which they were revealed. In spite of all these advantages, they pondered over each *sura* for years together. This shows that diving into this sea of knowledge and wisdom is not a child's play. On the other hand, it calls for strenuous labour and constant application. In the later ages, great scholars like Tabari, Zamakhshari and Razi and many others of the same calibre dedicated their whole lives to the study of the Quran but each of them at best could interpret a single aspect of this great book and, honestly speaking, failed to do justice even to that aspect. Throughout the fourteen centuries, there has been no scholar who, having written the most voluminous commentary on the Quran, might have claimed that he had said the last word on it and had left no room for further deliberation.

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1. The word literally means: 'reflection'. or 'deliberation,' but it is used as a Quranic term with a special significance which has been explained in the discussion that follows.
2. The second sura or chapter of the Quran.

Imam Ghazali in his *'Ihya-ul-Uloom'* has quoted the words of a divine which bring out the difference between the ordinary recitation of the Quran for *'Tazakkur'* and its thoughtful study for *'Tadabbur;* He says 'There is a recitation which takes me a week to finish the Quran. There is another kind of recitation which takes me a month, and another which takes me a year to finish it. There is still another kind of recitation which I commenced thirty years ago but which has not yet enabled me to complete its reading".

The Qualifications for a deliberative study of the Quran are extremely hard to acquire. It is not possible for a man to attain these qualifications unless he devotes himself to it wholly and solely and makes the learning and teaching of the Quran the be-all and end-all of his life. For such a study, he requires a thorough knowledge of the Arabic language and its grammar and a refined literary taste to appreciate the beauty, force and eloquence of expression. He must also acquire a good grounding in the language in which the Quran was revealed by a critical study of the works of the pre-Islamic poets and orators. Then there are the terms and modes of expression evolved by the Quran itself. A clear understanding of these (which will be possible only after a careful study of the Quran for a pretty long time) is also a necessary part of the mental equipment of a student of the Quran. Then he should be able to appreciate the coordination and coherence in the Quran. He must grasp the deep significance of the present order of the *suras* in the Quran, which is different from the chronological order in which they were revealed. He must also comprehend the sequence of thought between one *sura* and the other as well as between the verses of the same *sura*. This is an extremely arduous task which has defied the patience of even the most determined scholars, but this task, however arduous, has to be accomplished and unless it is accomplished, the question of comprehending the Quran will not arise. In fact, it is only when one is diving into the Quran for grasping the

subtle sequence between its parts that one forms an idea of the unfathomable depths of this boundless sea, and brings out from it finest pearls of knowledge and wisdom.

Besides the branches of learning referred to above, a good knowledge of Tradition and old scriptures is also necessary for the comprehension of the Quran. Now, this is the complete picture of the background of classical knowledge which should be possessed by a research scholar of the Quran.

This, however, is not all. He is not yet fully equipped to do justice to a deep and thoughtful study of the Quran, the type of study required for *Tadabbur.* He has still to reckon with modern sciences. We know that experimental and theoretical sciences are not static. Their level of advancement has been different in different ages. A scholar who wants to undertake the momentous task of comprehending the Quran should have an understanding of modern sciences —Physical, Biological and Social. He should be particularly conversant with the basic hypotheses of different sciences and with the method of deduction and inference employed by each. He should also keep himslef in touch with the latest trends and achievements in every important field of human inquiry. This knowledge of modern arts and sciences is essential for him, as it will widen his mental out-look and increase his intellectual capacity.

Thus equipped, he will embark upon his great enterprise. The Quran is a boundless ocean on which every sailor can sail only as far as his limited capacity can take him; and what useful discoveries he will make on his voyage will depend on the guidance he receives from the range of his knowledge and the breadth of his vision.

Particularly for the dissemination of the teaching of the Quran and the propagation of its message in the present-day world (which is also a duty incumbent upon every

Muslim) it is necessary that one should be fully equipped with modern knowledge, otherwise he will not be able to discharge this duty. Each generation inherits a large amount of knowledge from its predecessors and transmits it on to the succeeding generation with its own contribution added to it. Thus knowledge goes on accumulating as it passes from one generation to another. The present generation has received by this process of transmission, a stupendous stock of knowledge consisting of Logic and Philosophy, Religion and Metaphysics, Ethics and Psychology and other social sciences. This huge amount of current knowledge has dominated the mind of the people who have developed a naive belief in many wrong views. One requires a fairly good knowledge of modern sciences and should be conversant with not only the subject-matter of these sciences but also with their original sources and the system of principles underlying them. Only then he will be able to deal a crushing blow, in the manner of Ibn-Taimiyyah and Ghazali, at the very root of the false notions prevailing in his time. In this respect, the present age has touched the highest watermark. Besides the remarkable progress in the field of social sciences, it has witnessed an unprecedented advancement of the physical sciences and technology which has stunned the humanity and has rendered it incapable of making critical appraisal of the misguiding views that have found currency in the modern world.

Under these circumstances, the imperative duty of comprehending and interpreting the Quran cannot be fulfilled unless some patient and persevering men address themselves to this momentous task with singleminded devotion, equipping themselves with both classical and modern knowledge adequate for the task. These dedicated and fully equipped scholars of the Quran would carry out a searching analysis of the modern knowledge and sift the sound from the fallacious in the light of the Quran. They would approach the intellect of the modern man making a judicious use of modern terminology and sophisticated methods of logical

reasoning. Thus they would be able to illumine the minds of their contemporaries with the light of Quranic guidance. In this way the duty of 'explaining the Quran to the people' which was performed by the Holy Prophet himself in his life time would be performed by his Ummah in the present age.

Now the question arises : How can we produce such scholars ? Obviously they cannot be produced until we have, all over the Islamic world, a network of Universities which concentrate on Quranic Research making it the hub and centre of their intellectual activity. Round this central department, these universities should build up other departments like the department of theoretical sciences such as Logic, Metaphysics, Ethics, Psychology and Religion ; the department of social sciences such as Economics, Political Science and Law; and the department of physical sciences such as Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Geology and Astronomy. Every student who joins such a University should take up Quranic studies as a compulsory subject and should study one or more of the disciplines as elective subjects according to his own taste and aptitude. Thus he will be able to carry out research on the Quran in the sphere of his own study and present the light and guidance of the Quran effectively to the people.

Obviously, this is not an easy task. That is why it is not the responsibility of every person. It is to be done by only those persons who are born with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and whose minds are agitated by obstinate problems which can only be solved through prolonged thinking and reasoning. Such men are impelled to imbibe learning as a starving person is compelled to seek food and drink, and they march on, constantly uttering the prayer : "My Lord, Advance me in knowledge." If they happen to receive proper guidance, they get a goodly share of knowledge and wisdom. Comprehension and interpretation of the Quran is, in reality, the privilege of these persons. However, every

seeker of knowledge can participate in this noble task according to his ability and the time he can devote. In order to provide an inducement to the people for the study of the Quran, the Holy Prophet has said :

خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ (بخاری)

The best among you are those who learn the Quran and teach it (to others).

and, in the same context, we have a general instruction in the Quran:

فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِن كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ
(التوبة: ١٢٢)

Why should not a party withdraw itself from every expedition so that they could develop an understanding of religion. (IX:122)

This understanding of religion is the fruit of a deep and meditative study of Quran. It is this understanding which the Holy Prophet wanted his Sahaba to develop. He especially prayed for some of them that they might be granted a keen insight into religion. He also qualified his observation that "The best of you in Jahiliyya are the best of you in Islam" with the presence of this quality in their character.

IV

HUKM WA IQAMAT[1]

(Moulding the Personal Life of the Individual and the Corporate Life of the Community According to the Teaching of the Quran).

We have already considered three of the duties we owe to the Quran and now we proceed to consider the fourth. It is that we should act upon its teachings. Obviously, we are required to believe in the Quran, study it and ponder over its meanings in order that we may act upon its teachings in our actual life. The Quran is not a book of magical formulas or mantras, which are chanted to ward off evil. It is not a mere instrument for the attaining of blessings. Its *ayahs* (verses) are not to be recited only for the sake of getting a reward from God or for reducing the agony of death. Nor is it a subject of investigation and research in the sense that it should provide a good exercise to our intellectual and imaginative faculties so that we could indulge in all sorts of abstruse thinking and useless hair-splitting in the interpretation of its meanings.

The Quran, as we all know, is '*Hudal Linnas*' (guidance for mankind). The purpose for which this book has been revealed will be realized only if people act upon its teachings and make it a guide for them in every sphere of their life. The Holy Prophet has made it crystal clear that no useful purpose will be served by reading the Quran and pondering over its meaning if we do not try to mould our lives according to its injunctions. If we disregard its injunctions, the reading of the Quran, instead of doing us any good, will

1. These are two Quranic terms having a deep significance. The first (Hukm) refers to an individual's following the teaching of the Quran in his own life; the second(Iqamat), to shaping the collective life of the people in accordance with its fundamental tenets. Hence the long alternatetitle given in the brackets,

undermine our faith. In this context, the Holy Book speaks in unequivocal terms:

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ۝

(المائدۃ : ۴۴)

"Those who do not administer (their life) by (the light of) what God has revealed are no better than disbelievers." (V:44).

We have further clarification of, and emphasis over this point in the following traditions of the Holy Prophet:

1. "None of you can become a believer until all his desires are subordinated to what I have brought."[1]

2. "One who deems lawful what the Quran declares unlawful is not a believer in the Quran". (i.e., does not hold it to be a Divins revelation."

The case of a person, who is still wandering distract in quest of truth and has yet to decide, after a careful study of the Quran whether it is an absolute truth or not, is different: but the person who believes the Quran to be a book of God cannot benefit himself from it at all unless he studies it with a firm resolve that, however heavy the odds and however great the sacrifice, he would abide by its injunctions and modify his character according to its teachings. As we have already stated while explaining the literal meaning of the term, 'Tilawat', the Quran yields its perfect guidance only to those who abandon themselves to it and pore over it long and assiduously. Self-abandonment combined with a prolonged concentration born of a deeply cultivated self-discipline generates that state of submissiveness and self-effacement which has been referred to in the above-quoted tradition viz:

"None of you can become a believer until all his desires are subordinated to what I have brought."

A person who desires to get full guidance from the Quran, has, first of all, to put himself into this state of mind

1. i.e. the Quran.

and afterwards as his contact with the Quran becomes closer and closer he will continue to get greater and greater enlightenment from it.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَّاٰتٰهُمْ تَقْوٰىهُمْ ۝ (محمد : ١٧)

But to those who receive guidance, He increases the (light of) guidance, and bestows on them their piety and restraint (from evil). (XLVII:17)

It means that if a person actually makes a start moving under the guidance of the Quran, he will soon find himself marching steadily along the straight path and he will go on gradually rising to the higher and higher planes of spiritual development. On the other hand, if a person has not made up his mind to transform himself in accordance with the Quranic teachings; the time he spends on reciting the holy Book will be just wasted. Recitation of the Quran, instead of doing him any spiritual good, may actually prove to be curse on him. Imam Ghazali has quoted some mystic as saying : Some readers of the Quran do not get anything from it except the imprecation which it pronounces upon them. When he recites, *'La'natullah-i-a'lal Kazibeen'* (God's curse is on the liars) and if he himself is a liar, he becomes the target of this curse," Similarly, when a reader reads :

فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوْا فَاْذَنُوْا بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ (البقرة : ٢٧٩)

"So, if they do not desist (from devouring interest), give them an ultimatum of a war, on behalf of God and His Apostle. (11 :279).

and if he himself violates this injunction of God Almighty, he becomes the addressee of this ultimatum. In the same way, when those persons, who give short measure or short weight and those who indulge in backbiting and carping, read *"Wailul lilmutaffefina'*,[1] and *Wailul likulle humazat-il-lumaza*[2] feel that these dreadful warnings are meant for them. Reasoning on this line, we can easily understand what a man will gain from the recitation of the Quran if his actions

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1. LXXX–1 2. CIV–1

are not in accordance with its teachings.

As for those who study the Quran for investigation and research, for reflection over its meanings and for writing or compiling books on it, but do not put its injunctions into practice, we can say that they are the worst sinners. Their study and research is like indulging in a fascinating intellectual exercise, mere toying with the Holy Book, or even making fun of it. Consequently, instead of guiding them to the right path, it causes them to deviate.

يُضِلُّ بِهٖ كَثِيْرًا لا وَّيَهْدِىْ بِهٖ كَثِيْرًا ط (البقرة: ٢٦)

By it He causes many to stray, and many He leads to the right path. (II :26)

These so called scholars of the Quran disseminate all sorts of mischievous interpretations and become instrumental in misleading and misguiding people in different ways. Their whole thinking on the Holy Book is motivated by a vicious attempt to run after the abstruse and the recondite. The Quran has aptly described their motives in doing so in the following words :

فَيَتَّبِعُوْنَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَآءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَآءَ تَاْوِيْلِهٖ
(آل عمران: ٧)

So they follow the part thereof that is figurative, seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings. (III:7)

The *Sahaba* understood the supreme importance of incorporating teachings of the Quran into their lives. That is the reason why those, who had a special aptitude for reflecting over the Holy Book and would spend years together pondering over its single *suras*, made such long pauses in their study. It was not so much for the assimilation of the fruit of their research or the consolidation of their knowledge as for developing a bent of mind and a capacity for acting upon the Quranic teachings. They would not go ahead until they were satisfied that they were able to put into prac-

tice what they had learned from the Quran. Perhaps the reader will be a little surprised to know that by learning a *sura* by heart, the *Sahaba* did not mean only preserving it in memory but also comprehending its meanings clearly and moulding their character in the light of the guidance they received from it. Positively, what the *Sahaba* actually meant by *Hifz-ul-Quran* (memorising of the whole Quran) as that its words should be preserved in a person's memory, its knowledge should be treasured up in his mind and its teachings should be reflected in his conduct so that his whole personality was imbued with the spirit of the Quran and the deepest recesses of his being were illumined by its light.

The type of relationship between life and the Quran visible in the conduct of the *Sahaba* was to be found in its consummate and perfect form in the life of the Holy Prophet. Hadrat Aisha (wife of the Holy Prophet, who had the most intimate knowledge of his life and who as such was destined to play the role of a teacher for the Ummah) was once questioned about the Prophet's mode of life. She answered "His character was an embodiment of the teachings of the Quran". This extremely wise and judicious answer brings into relief the deep impact which the Quran must have on the life of a true Muslim.

In short, the best way to benefit ourselves from the study of the Quran is that we should go on mending our ways and modifying our conduct in the light of its teachings as we go on developing a deeper and deeper understanding of its meanings so that the Quran permeates into the composition of our character ; otherwise there is a danger that, according to the observation of the Holy Prophet that 'The Quran is a plea either for you or against you', the knowledge and understanding of the Quran may be an irrefutable argument against us for our damnation and may become instrumental in bringing us a greater punishment from the Almighty for our negligence and indifference.

Here it is necessary to explain that *Amal-bil-Quran*[1] (acting upon the Quranic injunctions) has two phases — individual and collective. There are injunctions, which pertain to a person's individual or private life and which he can carry out immediately. These become binding on him as soon as he comes to know of them. There is absolutely no justification on his part for any postponement or delay in the matter of incorporating these injunctions into his conduct. The punishment for negligence shown in this matter appears in the form of the withdrawal of divine grace and his consequent failure to live up to the principles embodied in the Holy Book. This gaping disparity between his word and deed, and his belief and action which is so hateful to God results in hypocrisy. This very fact has been referred to by the Holy Prophet in these words :

> "Most of the hypocrites among my followers will be the readers of the Quran."

Therefore, the only safe course for a person would be that he should immediately begin to act upon what he has been able to learn from the Quran.

As regards the injunctions which pertain to such affairs of our collective life as are beyond the control of an individual person, it is clear that he will not be bound to act upon them immediately. Nevertheless, it is his duty to try as far as possible to change the existing conditions and help in the establishment of a society based on the Quranic principles so that it may become possible to act upon the entire teaching of the Quran. Under these circumstances, the efforts made by him in this direction, will be "an excuse from him with his Lord"[2] and will be treated as a substitute

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1. O! Ye believers: why say ye that which ye do not do. (LXI : 2)

2. Ref. S. VII-164. When some of them said: "Why do you preach to a people whom God will destroy or visit with a terrible punishment?" Said the preachers: "That it may be accepted as an excuse by our Lord, and perchance they may fear him."

for actual compliance with the injunctions that pertain to our collective life. However, if he does not make any efforts in this direction and remains content with himself and with the discharge of his ordinary domestic obligations like the up-bringing of children etc., even his enactment of personal and private injunctions will resemble the reprehensible practice of those whom the Quran censures in the following words :

أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتٰبِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ ج (البقرة: ٨٥)

Then it is only a part of the Book that ye believe in and do ye reject the rest[1] (II :85)

Just as 'Tazakkur' is a general term for the understanding of the Quran, similarly the most general and widely-used term for acting upon its teachings is *'Hukm bima anzalallah'* (Taking decisions in the light of what God has revealed)[2]

For grasping the real significance of the word, *Hukm'* which is the core of this term we should consider its use in the following *ayahs* :

إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلّٰهِ ط (يوسف: ٤٠)

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1. These words are followed by a warning which should send a shudder through a person with a sensitive heart but it is a pity that we have adopted the same ways against which we have been warned. The result is that the warning : "What is the reward for those among you who behave like this but disgrace in this life ? And on the Day of Judgement they shall be consigned to the most grievous penalty. God is not unmindful of what they do."—is coming true. So far as disgrace in this life is concerned, it has already fallen to our lot and the Muslim peoples all the world over present a pitiable spectacle of wretchedness and degradation. As regards the chastisement in the Hereafter, we feel, we richly deserve that too ; but if God, out of his Infinite Kindness and Mercy, forgives us, it would be a different matter.

   "If Thou dost punish them, they are Thy servants ; if Thou does forgive them, Thou art the Exalted, the Wise. (V: 121)

   How aptly applies the following tradition of the Holy Prophet to our present condition :

   "Verily, some doth God exalt with this Book and others - He doth disgrace." The *Sahaba* attained power and glory by acting upon the teachings of the Quran and we have fallen into the abyss of degradation on account of forsaking it.

2. The words in the brackets are the literal translation of the phrase. Its real significance will be grasped from the discussion that follows.

'The authority is for none but God." (XII:40)

Here this word has been used in the sense of 'command or 'authority'

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ حُكْمًا عَرَبِيًّا ط (الرّعد: ٣٧)

"Thus have we revealed it to thee to be a criterion for judgement, in Arabic." (XIII:37).

Here the Quran has been styled as *'Hukm'*, which has been translated here as 'a criterion for judgement'.

اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ
بِمَآ اَرٰىكَ اللّٰهُ ط (النساء: ١٠٥)

We have sent down to thee the Book in truth, that though mayst judge between men, as guided by God. (IV:105).

Here a derivative of the word 'Hukm' has been used to indicate the mission of the Holy Prophet.

Ayahs No. 44 - 45 - 47 of sura V which categorically state that those who do not judge by the light of the Quran are none other than the unbelievers, the wrong-doers and the rebels.

If we try to express the sense of the word, *'Hukm'* in one word the nearest English equivalent that will strike our mind would be 'judgement' or 'decision' but in order to understand its full significance we must think of the two basic constituents of a person's conduct i.e., 'thought' and 'action.' When a view-point or a thought so completely dominates a person's mind that it comes to determine his judgement or decision, his action will be automatically subordinated to it. Therefore, for expressing the idea of putting its injunctions into practice, the Quran has employed the highly significant term, *'Hukm bima anzalallah'* (Deciding every issue in the light of the Quran), instead of *'Amal-bil-Quran'* (acting according to its teachings) to make the point clear that a person will be considered to be acting upon the teachings of the Quran only when his thinking is predominated by the Quran and the knowledge of Reality imparted by it has gone deep down into his heart and mind.

Another term that is used by the Quran to denote the idea of acting upon the teaching of the Holy Book is *'Iqamat'* (standing fast by).[1] It has been used in Ayah 69 of chapter V, which says about the Jews and the Christians that –

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ أَقَامُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْإِنجِيلَ وَمَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِم
مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ لَأَكَلُوا مِن فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِن تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ (المائدة:٦٦)

If only they had stood fast by the law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that was sent to them from their Lord, they would have enjoyed happiness from every side. (V : 66)

Again it is used in Ayah 71 of the same *sura*, which makes the announcement:

قُلْ يَٰٓأَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَسْتُمْ عَلٰى شَىْءٍ حَتّٰى تُقِيمُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ
وَالْإِنجِيلَ وَمَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ط (المائدة: ٦٨)

Say: "O people of the Book ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the law, the Gospel, and all other revelation that has come to you from your Lord:" (V : 68)

'Hukm bina anzalallah' pertains to making the conduct of the individual conform to the teaching of Quran, but *'Iqamatu ma unzila minallah'* pertains to the collective conduct of the community. It signifies the establishment of a system of life based on perfect social justice which ensures perfect balance and harmony between the individual members of the society and its different classes. When people come to owe allegiance to such a perfect soical order, the possiblitiy of tyranny and transgression, and cruelty and injustice is absolutely ruled out and all the doors of political oppression and economic exploitation are closed. This is why the ayah No. 69 of *sura* V quoted above specifically refers to the general social well-being and economic prosperity as an inevitable concomitant of such a system.

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1. This is the literal meaning of the term but its real significance will be grasped from the discussion that follows.

This establishment of a perfectly just and equitable soical order is the very purpose for which God deputed His apostles and sent down His books:

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ لِيَقُوْمَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ ج (الحديد ٢٥)

We sent aforetime our apostles with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of right and wrong) that men may stand forth in justice. (L:25)

In the second section of the chapter entitled *'ash-Shuraa'* we have a detailed discussion of this topic. Here we have a clear picture of the co-ordination subsisting between, the fundamental Islamic concept, mentioned in a highly meaningful and judicious sequence. These are (i) *Hukm-e-Ilahi* (God's Authority or Decision) (ii) *Iqamat-i-Din* Establishment of Din)[1] (iii) *Iman bil Kitab* (Belief in the Book) and (iv) *Qiyam-i-Nizam-i-Adl-i-Ijtimaiya;* (Creation of a just and equitable social order).

To begin with, we have the fundamental principle that God's Authority of Decision is Supreme, and in ayah 10, we have accordingly been directed to recognise and uphold it under all eventualities:

وَمَا اخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِيْهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَحُكْمُهٗٓ إِلَى اللّٰهِ ط (الشورٰى : ١٠)

Whatever it be wherein ye differ, the decision thereof is with God. (XLII : 10)

Ayah 13, refers to the manifestation of God's Authority or Decision in the form of *Din and Shariah.*[2]

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1. Generally translated as 're ligion' the term 'din' signifies the fundamental principles of God's religion and the way of life which comes into shape from putting these principles into practice.

2 The code of law evolved from the formulation of religious principles.

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الدِّيْنِ مَا وَصّٰى بِهٖ نُوْحًا وَّالَّذِيْٓ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهٖٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمُوْسٰى وَعِيْسٰٓى اَنْ اَقِيْمُوا الدِّيْنَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوْا فِيْهِ ۭ (الشورٰى: ١٣)

The same religion[1] has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah – which we have sent by inspiration to thee and that which we enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus: namely, that ye should remain steadfast in Religion[2], and make no divisions therein. (XLII : 13)

Then in ayah 15, the Holy Prophet has been istructed to declare his belief in the Book and work for the creation of a just society by practically dispensing justice to the people:

فَلِذٰلِكَ فَادْعُ ۚ وَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ اُمِرْتَ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَاۗءَهُمْ ۚ وَقُلْ اٰمَنْتُ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ كِتٰبٍ ۚ وَاُمِرْتُ لِاَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمْ ۭ (الشورٰى: ١٥)

Now then, for that (reason) call (them to the same Din) and stand steadfast as thou art commanded, nor follow thou their vain desires but say: 'I believe in the Book which God has sent down; and I am commanded to judge justly between you'. (XLII : 15)

This whole discussion is summed up in ayah 17:

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْزَلَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْمِيْزَانَ ۭ وَمَا يُدْرِيْكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ قَرِيْبٌ ۝ (الشورٰى: ١٧)

It is God who has sent down the Book in truth and the balance (By which to weigh conduct.)

And what will make thee realise that perhaps the Hour is close at hand. (XLII : 17)

Here again as in ayah from *Al-Hadid* quoted above, we have the word *'mizan'* (Balance) which is a very significant term

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1. The actual word used here is 'Din' which has been rendered as 'religion', the usual translation of the word.

used at different places in the Quran. Maulana Sahbbir Ahmad Usmani has offered a comprehensive explanation of the term in the following words:

> "God has guided man to devise the material 'balance' by which material objects are weighed. He has also granted man the intellectual 'balance', which is another name for sound common sense; and the moral 'balance', which is another name for sense of justice and fair play. But most important 'balance' granted to us is the Religion of Truth which settles the basic issue of the respective right of the Creator and His creatures and by which all issues can be justly decided."

According to the Quran, the real cause of people's deviation from the true religion, and of the chaos and anarchy in the world is their wicked tendency to dominate over others and keep them under subjugation. In ayah 14, of this very *sura* where the Muslims are exhorted to curb schismatic trends, the cause responsible for people's breaking away from the Religion of God and forming sects has been pointed out:

وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوْٓا اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ ط

(الشوری: ۱۴)

> And they became divided only after knowledge had reached them—through inequity and oppression among themselves. (XLII : 14)

We are now led to consider the final fruit of moulding our thought and action according to the teachings of Quran. It should be, as we have discussed above, the establishment of God's Sovereignty and the Rule of Justice in the world. When such an order is set up, the world becomes free from all sorts of inequity and oppression. Then the priests and divines cannot install themselves as godheads; the wealthy can no longer keep the circulation of wealth confined among themselves and there is no possibility of any kind of coercion and exploitation. All become servants of Allah and begin to behave towards one another like brothers. The rulers consider it their foremost duty to safeguard the rights of the

weak at all cost, and not to allow the powerful to tyrannise over them in any way.

The establishment of such a just and equitable order in accordance with the teaching of the Quran is the bounding duty of its followers. Its fulfilment is their collective responsibility for which they will be answerable to the Almighty. It is therefore time, they should clearly understand this responsibility and strive hard to dischargeit. Perhaps, that is why at the end of the discussion in *ash-Shuraa* which we have reproduced briefly above, there is a mention of the Day of Judgement in the words : 'Perhaps the Hour is close at hand'. It implies the warning that we should not be guilty of any negligence and delay in this important matter lest we be suddenly overtaken by the final Doom. This duty we owe to the Book of God will be fulfilled if we actually set up a system of Social Equity, 'so that people may stand forth in justice' and their rulers 'may judge justly between them'. It will be seen that we have the foundation and structure of this system in the fundamental principles of our Religion and its code of life that have been enunciated by the Quran.

It may well be asked : What practical measures should be adopted for the fulfilment of this duty. Although a complete answer to this question is beyond the scope of this booklet, still a few remarks on this topic will not be out of place here. In the first place, let it be understood that the enforcement of the fundamental principles of Religion in the society and the establishment of just and equitable order envisaged by the Quran should not be conceived on the pattern of a social, economic or political movement : nor should we strive for the achievement of this splendid ideal as we do for the success of these movements. To do so would be fraught with a grave danger and may even be suicidal. We must know there is only one method of bringing about the transformation of an individual as required by Islam, similarly there is only one method of effecting an Islamic Revolution in the society. So far as the individual is concerned, we

should first make the Quran dominate his heart and mind so that his feeling, thinking and reasoning may function in consonance with its spirit and his actions may, consequently accord with its teachings; and likewise for the change in society demanded by Islam, we have first to illumine the minds and hearts of its intelligentsia with the light of the Quran so that they are intellectually and spiritually transformed. After the edification of the intelligentsia who are the brain of the community, the light of the Quran could be easily spread to other people who are just the limbs of the community and generally follow its brain. Thus the heart of the whole community will beat in unison with the teachings of the Quran and the fundamental principles of God's religion will come to operate in the form of a perfect system of collective justice.

There is no other way of bringing about this revolution and the plea that goal could be achieved by launching a political movement by exploiting the emotional attachment of a Muslim people to their hereditary religion, is absolutely vain, and making such an attempt would be like building sandcastles.

Hoping to be excused for this digression, I must repeat that the duty of acting upon the teachings of the Quran, which assumes two forms, *'Hukm bima anzalallah'*[1] and *Iqamatu ma unzila minallah*[2] is an absolute imperative upon the Muslims individually and collectively; and, therefore, each one of us according to his means and capacity and the whole Ummah according to its strength and resources should earnestly endeavour to discharge this great responsibility.

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1. Literally "judging or deciding (every issue) in the light of what God has sent down" the term has been explained in the foregoing discussion.

2. Literally "Establishment of what has been sent from God." the true significance of the term, which has been explained in the preceding discussion, is the actual enforcement of the fundamental principles of God's religion and its code of life in society.

V

TABLIGH-WA-TABYIN

(Propagation of the Quranic Message and its Exposition)

Besides the four duties that we owe to the Quran i.e., believing it to be the book of God, reading it, understanding it and acting upon its teachings, another duty which rests upon every Muslim and which he must discharge according to his strength and ability, is that he must communicate its teachings to others.

For 'Communicating the message of the Quran to the people', the appropriate and comprehensive terms is *Tabligh*. Teaching the Quran to others is also a form of *Tabligh*. Similarly explaining the meanings of the Quran to the people is *Tabligh* at a higher plane.

In order to understand the importance of this duty that we owe to the Quran, let us consider the purpose for which it was revealed. It has been stated by the Quran itself in the following words :

هٰذَا بَلٰغٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنْذَرُوْا بِهٖ (ابراهيم: ۵۲)

This (Quran) is a communication to the people and is meant to be a warning to them. (XIV:52)

Again, it declares the basic objective of its being revealed to the Holy Propeht in *ayah* 19, of Chapter VI.

وَاُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ لِاُنْذِرَكُمْ بِهٖ وَمَنْۢ بَلَغَ (الانعام: ۱۹)

This Quran has been revealed to me by inspiration that I may warn you and all whom it reaches. (VI:19)

It also announces in clear-cut words that it was the foremost duty of the Holy Prophet to communicate the message of the Quran to mankind with utmost faithfulness and that the slightest negligence in the fulfilment of this duty would be a serious dereliction of his prophetic mission.

Hence the peremptory command in Chapter V:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الرَّسُوْلُ بَلِّغْ مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ ؕ
وَاِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسٰلَتَهٗ ؕ (المائدة ، ٦٧)

"O messenger proclaim the (message) which hath been sent to thee from the Lord. If thou didst not, thou wouldst not have fulfilled and proclaimed His mission.(V:67)

In perfect obedience to this command, the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him), right from the moment he received the first revelation to the last minute of his earthly life for full 23 years, bore untold hardships and waged a ceaseless struggle to fulfil the momentous duty entrusted to him. Although this long and heroic struggle passed through many phases and he had to play different roles for the fulfilment of his mission, still the Quran was, all along, the pivotal point of all his activities. He was constantly occupied with reciting the Quran, explaining its meanings and communicating the message to the people. The Quran describes the Holy Prophet's function of imparting the knowledge of the Book to the people, to enlighten their minds and chasten their character, at four different places in the following words :

يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ (اٰل عمران: ١٦٤- الجمعة ٢)

He (the apostle) rehearses to them His signs to chasten them, and to instruct them in scripture and wisdsom. (III:164,LXII : 2)

Obviously, these words indicate the same technique as we have suggested in the foregoing pages while explaining the right method of bringing about the Islamic revolution in our society. In short, pursuing this method with extraordinary courage and perseverance for 23 years, the Holy Prophet acquitted himself admirably and communicated God's message to mankind. He also sought the co-operation of his devoted companions for the completion of his mission

exhorting them to:

بَلِّغُوا عَنِّيْ وَلَوْ آيَةً

"Convey from me to the people even if it be a single ayah."

Having accomplished his mission, he transferred the responsibility of propagating the message of the Quran to his Ummah. Having obtained more than once the testimony of the people to the effect that he had successfully conveyed God's message to them, he, in his historic address to a gathering of one lac and twenty five thousand companions on the occasion of the last pilgrimage, issued the abiding instructions:

فَلْيُبَلِّغِ الشَّاهِدُ الْغَائِبَ

"Those who are present should convey (my message) to those who are not".

Thus the duty of spreading God's message to every nook and corner of the world was devolved on the shoulders of the Ummah for all time to come and the Ummah as a whole shall be answerable to the Almighty with regard to this onerous duty. As the Ummah consists of the individuals, every individual therefore is responsible for the discharge of this duty : men of learning accordingto their knoweldge and ability and common people according to their means and capability.

The words of the Holy Prophet : "Convey from me to the people though it be a single ayah" prove it beyond the shadow of a doubt that no individual is exempt from this duty. If a person can only read the Arabic text of the Quran, he should teach others to do so; one who has memorized the whole Quran should help others in memorizing it ; one who can translate the text, should do so for others ; and one who can comprehend its meaning should explain and interpret it to others. If a person understands the meaning of a single *sura* and explains the same to others, and if he knows only a single *ayah* and teaches it to others, he will be discharging the duty of communicating the Quran ;

but the collective duty of the Ummah in this connection will not be fulfilled unless the teaching of the Quran, its text and its import, is propagated everywhere through the length and breadth of the World.

Unfortunately under the present conditions, this universal proclamation of God's message, which is expected of the World Muslims, seems to be a far cry or an unattainable ideal, because things have come to such a pass that the Ummah to whom this great and honorific duty was assigned has grown totally ignorant of the Quran and itself needs be instructed in the Book of God which it has practically forsaken. Hence what is urgently required under the present situation is that a movement for learning and teaching the Quran should be launched among the Muslims themselves so that they may develop a fresh attitude of devotion to and interest in the study of the Quran. May God grant us strength for this task. Amen !

As it has been pointed out in the beginning of this discussion, a higher form of *Tabligh* (communication) is *Tabyin* (Exposition). The message of the Quran is not only to be communicated but its meanings are also to be explained and interpreted to the people. In Quranic terminology, this has been called *'Tabyin'*. Hence *'Tabligh'* and *'Tabyin'* appear together in the title of this chapter. It will be seen that the exposition of the Quran demands that one who undertakes this task should (i) talk to his audience at their own level so that the truths of the Quran are brought home to them and (ii) explain the implications and arguments of different *ayahs* and *sura*.

It will be noted that the Quran calls itself *'Bayan'* (a plain statement).

هَٰذَا بَيَانٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (آل عمران: ١٣٨)

"This is a plain statement to men, a guidance and instruction to those who fear God" (III:138)

It frequently characterises itself as *'mubin'* (clear), and its verses, as *'bayyinat'* and *'mobayyinat'* (clear signs or manifestations). It also points out that to explain and interpret the scriptures is the responsibility of the Prophets and their Ummahs to whom these are vouchsafed. The Holy Prophet is addressed on this point in the following words:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ (النحل: ۴۴)

"And we sent down unto thee the message that thou mayst explain clearly to men what is sent for them."(XVI:44)

It has been stated about the Jews and Christians that they were bound by a covenant to explain the Book of God to mankind :

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتٰبَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ ۝
(آل عمران: ۱۸۷)

"And remember God took a covenant from the people of the Book to make it known and clear to mankind". (III :187).

When they did not fulfil this covenant and on the contrary tried to canceal the truth, they were accursed :

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالْهُدٰى
مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتٰبِ ۙ أُولٰٓئِكَ
يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللّٰعِنُونَ ۝ (البقرة: ۱۵۹)

"Those who conceal the clear signs we have sent down, and the guidance after We have made it clear for the people in the book, on them shall be God's curse and the curse of those entitled to curse" (II:159)

"Tabyin" has different forms. Its simplest form consists in expressing the plain meanings of the Quran in an easy, straight-forward manner in the common language of the people. Naturally, the medium to be used for explaining the Quran to the people has to be their own language.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهٖ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ ؕ
(ابراهيم : ۴)

"We sent not an apostle except (to teach) in the language of his own people, in order to make things clear to them. (XIV:4).

"Tabyin" in its highest form, is rather a job with a challenge. One who resolves upon fulfilling his duty of explaining the Quran in this sense of the term will not merely translate its text, but he will try to unfold the knowledge and wisdom contained in this great book and bring out the implied meanings and subtle significance of its *ayahs* and *suras*. He will explain the mode of inference and deduction adopted by the Quran and repudiate effectively, with the help of Quranic arguments, the false notion and misleading views prevalent among the people. He will endeavour to establish the truth of the Quran and its teachings, reasoning convincingly at the highest plane of thought accessible to the people in a particular age according to its intellectual advancement. As regards the question : How can we discharge our responsibility of explaining the Quran and bringing its message home to the people?– We can say that for *"tabyin"* in its simplest form we should publish translations and commentaries of the Holy Book in all the important languages of the world and circulate them widely. So far as our obligation for *"Tabyin"* in its highest form is concerned, it cannot be properly and adequately discharged, as we have already suggested, unless we set up all over the Muslim world a net-work of such universities and academies as may concentrate on "Quranic study and Research' assigning it the central place in the scheme of their disciplines. Through standard institutions of this type we shall be able to explain the teachings of the Quran to the people of the modern world.

NOW A DIRECT WORD WITH THE READER

Dear reader; Excuse me for taking the liberty of directly addressing you a few words. I am led to make this direct

personal approach to you because of my great solicitude for your real welfare.

I have given you an idea of the duties which we as Muslims owe to the Quran and now in the end I must urge you with all the emphasis at my command to make an earnest effort to discharge these duties with utmost care. We are the most fortunate people in the world in the sense that we possess the Book of God perfectly intact in its original form. Whereas it is a cause of great honour for us, it also lays upon us a heavy responsibility. Prior to the advent of Islam, the Israelites were the custodians of God's Book, but when they did not discharge their responsibilities and proved unworthy of the honour conferred upon them, God Almighty raised a new Ummah (i.e., the Muslims) and vouchsafed His Book to them in the form of 'The Quran.' In Chapter '52' we have a similitude of the people who did not fulfil the duties that develoved upon them as custodians of God's Book.

مَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوْهَا
كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ اَسْفَارًا ط (الجمعة : ٥)

The similitude of those who were charged with the (obligations of) the Moṣaic Law but who subsequently failed in those (obligations) is that of a donkey which carries huge tomes. (LXII : 5)

In the subsequent part of the verse, it has been plainly stated that their failure to discharge their obligations towards their Holy Book is tantamount to their falsifying its truth:

بِئْسَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ط

Evil is the similitude of people who falsify the signs of God. (LXII:5)

The verse ends in the categorical declaration that it is not in God's nature to grant guidance to such people :

وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ○ (الجمعة: ٥)

And God guides not people who do wrong. (LXII:5)

God forbid that you or I be included among the people who are guilty of falsifying the Book of God by their negligence in the discharge of their obligations towards it and thus incur God's wrath. I most earnestly pray that God may make us custodians of the Quran in the real sense of the term and enable us to fulfil our duties towards it in the best way, which may enable us to win His good pleasure.

We should remember the time when Allah's Messenger will appear as a prosecution-witness in the court of the Almighty and charge his people with forsaking the Quran :

وَقَالَ الرَّسُوْلُ يٰرَبِّ اِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ مَهْجُوْرًا ○ (الفرقان: ٣٠)

Then the apostle will say: O my Lord! Truly my people took this Quran for just foolish nonsense (and as such ignored it contemptuously). (XXV : 30)

Although in this ayah the words "my people" refer to the unbelievers who turned a deaf ear to the Quran, treating it with disdain ; nevertheless it applies with equal cogency to people like us who believe in the Quran but have practically rejected it as a thing of least moment or consequence.

Let me quote for you what Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani has to say on this point:

"Although the ayah really refers to the conduct of the unbelievers, yet (it has a wider application) and all those who do not confirm the truth of the Quran (by actually following its teachings in their life), do not ponder over its meanings, do not recite it properly, do not try to learn its correct reading; but indulge in all sorts of vain and frivolous pursuits turning their back upon it (also come under its purview) and

would be considered guilty of *Hijran-ul-Quran* (abandonment of the Quran.)[1]

Let me once again seek Almighty's protection against our being included among such people and conclude my address with the following prayer which is generally offered on completing the recitation of the whole Quran but which, I believe, should frequently be offered so that Allah may grant us strength to fulfil the duties we owe to His Book.

"O my Lord! Be merciful to us because of (our link) with the Quran; make it for us a Leader, (and a source of) light, guidance and mercy, cause us to recall from it what we have failed to understand ; give us strength to recite it day and night ; and make it a plea for our salvation. O Lord of the worlds."

Let me in the end present you the gift of a prayer which appears in a tradition narrated on the authority of Abdullah Bin Masud. It is in reality a prayer which the Holy Prophet prescribed for his *Sahaba* as a remedy for cares and worries. But it is a splendid supplication that shows the attitude of an ideal bondman towards his Master and describes the curative effect of the Quran on the human soul. It also indicates how deep a devotion the Holy Prophet had for the Quran and in how high an esteem he held it. The prayer runs as follows :

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1. By a strange coincidence — a coincidence that indicates the Maulana's spiritual and intellectual kinship with the Holy Prophet—we have a similar wording in a tradition which runs as follow:

   "O people of the Quran, do not make the Quran a pillow (that you may sleep over it). You should rather recite it day and night; propagate it (all over the world), read it in a pleasing voice; ponder over its meaning so that you may prosper". What a noble title has been conferred upon us! How succinct the tradition that so beautifully sums up the duties that devolve upon us as 'people of the Quran'! In fact, this masterpiece of conciseness is hundred times more expressive than any number of our long, pompous speeches on the subject. True was the claim of the Holy Prophet that he was gifted with the power of laconic speech.'

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّي عَبْدُكَ ، وَابْنُ عَبْدِكَ ، وَابْنُ اَمَتِكَ ، فِي قَبْضَتِكَ ،
نَاصِيَتِي بِيَدِكَ ، مَاضٍ فِيَّ حُكْمُكَ ، عَدْلٌ فِيَّ قَضَاءُكَ ،
اَسْئَلُكَ ، بِكُلِّ اسْمٍ هُوَ لَكَ سَمَّيْتَ بِهٖ نَفْسَكَ ، اَوْ عَلَّمْتَهٗ
اَحَدًا مِنْ خَلْقِكَ ، اَوْ اَنْزَلْتَهٗ فِي كِتَابِكَ ، اَوِ اسْتَأْثَرْتَ بِهٖ
فِي مَكْنُوْنِ الْغَيْبِ عِنْدَكَ ، اَنْ تَجْعَلَ الْقُرْاٰنَ رَبِيْعَ قَلْبِي وَ
نُوْرَ صَدْرِي ، وَجِلَاءَ حُزْنِي وَذَهَابَ هَمِّي وَغَمِّي - (اٰمِيْن)

O my God : verily I am Thy bondman, the son of Thy bondman, and the son of Thy bonmaid. I am under Thy control. My fore-lock is in Thy hand. Thy decision is to be executed about me and just shall be Thy judgement in my case. I beg of Thee—addressing Thee with all those names that Thou hast named Thyself with, or that Thou hast taught any of Thy creatures, or that Thou hast revealed in Thy Book, or that Thou hast preferred to keep secret in the realm of the Unseen— to make the Quran a source of delight for my heart and of light for my breast, and an instrument of dispelling my grief, and driving away my cares and worries (Accept this prayer of mine, O Lord of the Worlds!). Amen.

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The Sole Aim
before

The Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Quran
Lahore

is

to disseminate and propagate
the knowledge and Wisdom

of

The Holy Quran

The fountain-head of faith and enlightenment
on a vast scale

and

on a higher intellectual plane
so as to launch a popular movement

for

The Revitalization of Faith

among the Muslims in general

and

their intelligentsia in particular
with the ultimate objective of bringing about an

Islamic Renaissance

and

ushering in, for the second time in history, the Blessed Era
in which

The True Islamic Way of Life reigned supreme.

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